

Pilot Mountain North Carolina

*CPNI Workshop Report
June 7-8, 2018*





ABOUT CPNI

CPNI is an independent research institution focused on the construction industry and founded by the Construction Professional Network of North Carolina (CPN), a non-profit membership organization. The mission of the Institute is to identify key issues related to industry performance, economic development, and the betterment of CPN members and the communities they serve. Through workshops in communities across North Carolina, members of CPN leverage their expertise to consult with local government and community leaders on redevelopment strategies for their town.

Learn more at www.cpni-nc.org



ABOUT NCGROWTH

NCGrowth is an EDA University Center at the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill that helps businesses and communities create good jobs and equitable opportunities through applied research and technical assistance. With a passionate staff and a dynamic pool of graduate student analysts, we partner with businesses, communities, governments and other organizations to tackle outcome-based economic development and entrepreneurship projects. Learn more at www.ncgrowth.unc.edu

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CPNI and NCGrowth held a two-day workshop in Pilot Neck, NC on June 7 and 8, 2018. During the workshop, team members met with town officials and community stakeholders to assess the built assets and economic conditions of the town. In addition to touring buildings of interest, workshop participants identified key issue areas and brainstormed potential strategies for the town moving forward. Discussion and recommendations centered around three topics:

- > **Downtown Redevelopment**
- > **Built Assets**
- > **Marketing & Branding**

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

Town officials and community stakeholders in attendance included:

- Dwight Atkins, Mayor
- Michael Boaz, Town Manager
- Emily Grogan, Horne Creek Farm
- Josie Grogan
- Jenny Kindy, Main Street Coordinator
- Bert Meijboon, Business Owner
- Scott Needham, Property Owner
- Wayne Nichols
- Kim Quinn, Commissioner & Business Owner

CPNI team consisted of the following members:

- Chuck Cardwell, SKA Consulting Engineers
- Jeanine Bachtel, UNC-Charlotte
- Bill Blancato, Doughton Blancato
- Stephanie Cooper, Moseley Architects
- Andy Penry, Penry Riemann PLLC
- Ricky Adkins, New Atlantic Contracting
- Sun Breza, ECS Southeast
- Frank Verdi, Consultant
- Andrew Pack, Woolpert
- Randy Benson, Benson Productions
- Lucia Constantine, NCGrowth
- Jessica Freeman, CPNI staff



CPNI Workshop at Pilot Center | Source: Author



CPNI Team tours local building | Source: Author

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Under current leadership, the Town of Pilot Mountain has undertaken a number of efforts to revitalize the downtown. The Main Street Committee, coordinated by Jenny Kindy, has four subcommittees focused on design, economic vitality, branding, and events. The Town commissioned a streetscape plan by Benchmark and is in the process of raising funds for implementation. The plan includes a redesign of the town hall complex to include an outdoor amphitheater and market area as well as construction of a greenway to connect the Town with Pilot Mountain State Park.

The events committee has designed and implemented a number of popular events including a weekly farmers' market, vintage market, food truck rodeo, outdoor movie screenings, and cruise-ins. The events have proved a success, drawing visitors and residents alike to downtown Pilot Mountain.

DOWNTOWN ASSESSMENT

Downtown Pilot Mountain has a number of thriving businesses that draw foot traffic and pedestrian activity throughout the day. These include several hair salons, a restaurant, a sandwich shop, a coffee shop, an antiques store, a photography business, and health food store among others. Music emanates from outdoor speakers during business hours which lends a certain congeniality to the downtown experience.

At the same time, the downtown has little activity after hours and few points of interests for families, the dominant demographic of Pilot Mountain. Furthermore, there are a handful of underutilized storefronts. Rather than sell the property or run a business, disinterested owners are using downtown buildings as storage. Through economic incentives and modifications to the zoning code, the town can attract restaurant, retail and other amenities downtown that could boost its existing vitality. Many people visit downtown for special events but they need a reason to come on a more regular basis.

Community Assets

- High quality of living including good schools, low traffic and low crime
- Strong sense of community
- Proximity to Winston-Salem and state parks with good highway access
- Water & sewer capacity
- Young leadership & town champions
- Buildings are in relatively good condition
- Variety of events drawing people downtown
- Scenic view of Pilot Mountain
- Walkable downtown
- Planning efforts underway

Community Needs

- Increased resident participation in public meetings
- Better engagement with downtown property owners
- Downtown amenities for families
- Assistance attracting developers
- More residential and recreational options downtown
- Transforming vacant storefronts into vibrant businesses

"I feel like we have everything here. I like the outdoors - we have two state parks nearby. It's a very safe town. I could go out in the middle of the night and not worry about being mugged. Close enough to Winston-Salem but without the traffic and a more laid back atmosphere."
- Scott Needham, Resident

Built Assets



224 East Main St

Owner: Tacha Inc

Building Value: \$99,880

Land Value: \$31,550

Total Assessed Value: \$132,930

Formerly a hosiery mill, this building is now vacant. Town officials believe the mill would qualify for tax credits. Ownership of the building is currently subject to a legal proceeding. The Town might consult with a developer like Self-Help to explore potential for adaptive reuse including condos.



201 East Main St

Owner: Providence Industrial Electronics

Building Value: \$114,010

Land Value: \$90,000

Total Assessed Value: \$132,930

This building is vacant but in good condition. Former tenants included a hair salon and a mechanic. The CPNI team determined that the space could be rehabilitated and could make an attractive location for a brewery, tasting room, or distillery.



100 Main Street

Owner: Thornton Beroth

Building Value: \$38,560

Land Value: \$31,500

Total Assessed Value: \$70,060

The former Bank of Pilot Mountain is the most architecturally significant and one of the oldest buildings in the town. Built in 1900, it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It currently houses an impressive private collection of oil and gas memorabilia with limited public visitation hours.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Downtown Revitalization



Foothills Brewing in Winston-Salem | Source: Trip Advisor



Available space in Pilot Mountain | Source: Author

> Attract a brewery downtown: Craft brewing has expanded dramatically in the state of North Carolina, generating \$1.2 billion in revenues and over 10,000 jobs annually. Small towns like Kinston and Tarboro have capitalized on the craft beer trend to revitalize their downtown areas. Given the number of visitors to the area, the proximity to established breweries, and the scenic backdrop, Pilot Mountain is poised to open a brewery of its own. The town could take the following steps:

- Create an incentive package for breweries offering assistance with site selection, permit fees, expedited permitting and highlighting the town's water and sewer capacity and job training program with Surry Community College.
- Create a website and marketing campaign (ex. [Brew It Madras](#))
- Modify ordinances and zoning to allow for a mix of uses downtown
- Recruit successful breweries in Winston-Salem to open a new location or relocate part of brewing operation
- Consider partnering with Yadkin Valley wineries to open a tasting room

> Encourage live/work/play development

downtown: Young residents are increasingly attracted to walkable communities that combine work, residential and recreational opportunities. As Winston-Salem continues to grow and expand, Pilot Mountain is positioned to become a bedroom community for residents seeking a low cost of living and short commute. Increased residence downtown will in turn increase demand for downtown amenities and enhance property values.

- Renovate second floor of downtown buildings into residential lofts or apartments
- Offer incentives for downtown living and/or artist studios in partnership with local financial institutions (ex. [Paducah Artist Relocation Program](#))
- Build amenities (parks, public exhibits, etc) to attract families.
- Advertise low rents to companies who may want satellite offices or creative professionals looking for affordable space
- Share stories of success (e.g. Adele Lee, Scott Needham, etc.)
- Continue implementation of streetscape plan



View of Pilot Mountain from Hwy 52 | Source: Wikimedia

Marketing and Branding

> Make outdoor recreation an economic driver:

The Town of Pilot Mountain can leverage its environmental assets, including Pilot Mountain State Park, Horne Creek Farm, Surry County Scenic Bikeway, and Mountains to Sea Trail to spur economic development. Visitors from across the state come to Pilot Mountain for climbing, biking, hiking and canoeing. By branding Pilot Mountain as an outdoor recreation destination, the Town could increase tourism and attract outdoor-oriented businesses.

- Create a comprehensive marketing plan for the town that includes printed brochures and web content
- Work with County and Town Tourism Development Authority to launch a website highlighting recreational opportunities and town amenities (ex. [Roanoke Outside](#))
- Co-sponsor events with regional attractions (i.e. Pilot Mountain State Park and Horne Creek Farm)
- Emphasize bicycling opportunities like the Surry County Scenic Bikeway

> Improve signage & wayfinding for downtown:

Currently, there are no signs at Key and Main directing visitors to the downtown area. Moreover, the Town might benefit from advertising events on Highway 52.



Welcome Sign for Pilot Mountain | Source: Author



Sign for Surry County Scenic Bikeway | Source: Author

NEXT STEPS

1. Create a guide for starting and growing a business that outlines local resources, permitting and zoning processes, tax policies, and steps to get business loans.
2. Create an inventory of all the downtown buildings with information to encourage private investment, including physical characteristics, rental rates, ownership, and identification of tax-delinquent properties and those near foreclosure and disseminate to private developers.
3. Explore unconventional sources of funding by seeking corporate sponsorships from vested local businesses (e.g. JR Lynch & Sons, Inc; CVS Pharmacy), grantmaking from local foundations (e.g. Novant Health) and local lenders (e.g. Self-Help Credit Union).
4. Continue implementation of streetscape plan.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Organizations

- [Development Finance Initiative \(DFI\)](#): DFI partners with local governments to attract private investment for transformative projects by providing specialized finance and development expertise. They are a good organization to engage in transforming sites that are owned by the town. They charge fee for service and offer pro-bono assistance through classes
- [North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Restoration Services Branch](#): The office provides a variety of technical preservation services to the public and to government agencies, including coordination of tax credits for rehabilitation of historic buildings.

- [Project for Public Spaces \(PPS\)](#): A nonprofit organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build strong communities. They have extensive web resources as well as examples of successful placemaking projects that can serve as inspiration for Pilot Mountain.
- [Self-Help Credit Union](#): Self-Help is a credit union and community development financial institution based in Durham, NC. Through commercial real estate development and community development finance, Self-Help has supported revitalization projects in Durham and is currently working to revitalize Revolution Mill in Greensboro.
- [Strong Towns](#): Strong Towns is a media organization that challenges how cities and towns are built and supports a model of development that allows them to become financially strong and resilient. They offer examples of success, host live events and build community online.
- [Thread Capital](#): A subsidiary of the NC Rural Center, Thread Capital provides capital, coaching and connections to start small businesses in North Carolina.

Recommended Reading

- Elizabeth Packer, "[Brewery Incubators on the Rise](#)" CED SOG (blog), October 27, 2016
- Melissa Kramer, [Framework for Creating a Smart Growth Economic Development Strategy: A Tool for Small Cities and Towns](#). Office of Sustainable Communities, Smart Growth Program, 2016
- Tyler Mulligan, "[Maintenance of vacant or neglected commercial buildings: options for NC local governments](#)" CED SOG (blog), March, 20, 2018